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ABSTRACT

This article explores the modalities of accommodation of two dialectophones [speakers of a dialect] in the Haut-Valais [this is a regional place name], one of whom has lived in Berne, Switzerland for more than 20 years, the other for several years. By exploiting the notion of repertoire, the study focused on the greater or lesser convergence between the original varieties of the two informants and the Bearnaise variety of the Germanic dialect basing their study on phonetic observations obtained in informal conversational situations. The data show that there is no direct correlation among the language attitudes, the structure of the social networks of the informants and their linguistic behavior. Furthermore, the factors that are currently accepted in the literature as influencing language behaviors (age and gender) are not confirmed in these data. On the other hand, the phenomenon of accommodation seems to be sensitive to the conversational context and to the themes raised in the exchange. (Contains 31 references.) (Author/VWL)

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Two Patterns of Dialect Accommodation of Valais German Speakers in Berne

Marc MATTER
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Cet article explore les modalités d'accomodation de deux dialectophones du Haut-Valais établis à Berne depuis plus de 20 ans pour l'un et quelques années pour l'autre. En exploitant la notion de répertoire, les auteurs étudient la plus ou moins grande convergence entre les variétés d'origine des deux informateurs et la variété bernoise du dialecte alémanique en se basant sur des observables phonétiques obtenus en situation d'entretiens informels. Les données montrent qu'il n'y a pas de corrélation directe entre les attitudes langagières, la structure des réseaux sociaux des informateurs et leur comportement linguistique. De plus, les facteurs couramment admis dans la littérature comme influençant les comportements langagiers (l'âge et le sexe) ne se vérifient pas dans les données. En revanche, le phénomène d'accomodation semble être sensible au contexte conversationnel et aux thèmes abordés dans l'échange.

1. Introduction

It has been stated that the only persistent fact about language qua *parole* is its ever changing nature. Empirical studies of language change have shown that such change is observable in real time over a certain period of time in the life of an individual (e.g. Siebenhaar (forthcoming) or Prince, 1987) or a community [e.g. Van de Velde *et al.*, 1997; Siebenhaar (forthcoming)] or, when real time data are inaccessible or hard to come by, in apparent time (e.g. Trudgill, 1974; *cf.* also Trudgill, 1988). Such global changes usually break down into more small-scale changes, intermediate states on the continuum from the source variety to the target. The variety of one individual may be stable or fossilized at any point on the continuum or manifest age-grading. In this paper, we will show the patterns of linguistic change in the form of dialect accommodation of two individuals who are part of the Üsserschwyz corpus. On the basis of these quite contrasting data we will make two claims, namely that neither the direction nor the speed of change is predictable from attitudes and social network structure and that even a fossilized variety may still show considerable internal variation.

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In the Dialect Loyalty Project[2], the basic assumption is that speakers have a *repertoire* of registers (Gal, 1987) from which they pick the appropriate variety to suit the needs of a particular situation. For our purposes, the term *repertoire* is extended to include different dialects and converging or *accommodated* varieties[3]. For this paper, the role of Standard High German can be neglected because any Swiss German dialect is the adequate and appropriate means of communication for everyday, non-formal interactions. In earlier work on code-switching, Standard High German was highlighted as the H-variety in complementary distribution with the various regional dialects, the L-varieties, in the German speaking part of Switzerland (Fergusson, 1959). However, reinterpretations of the linguistic situation in German-speaking Switzerland have led researchers away from the classical model of *diglossia* to the concept of *medial diglossia* (Kolde, 1981) and, more recently, *asymmetric bilingualism* (Werlen, 1998). In these models, the highly prestigious status of dialects and the absence of a continuum between dialects and the standard variety become the focus of attention. Implicit in these studies is the claim that the use of dialectal variants is subject to a set of constraints which are different from those governing the use of Standard High German and which therefore deserve to be studied independently.

2. Background

2.1 The Dialect Loyalty Project

All interactions involving speakers of two or more dialects can give rise to various types of dialect accommodation. In order to control as many factors as possible, all informants of the Dialect Loyalty Project come from the geographically well-defined Upper Rhone Valley. The Upper Rhone Valley is located in the mountainous canton of Valais and belongs to the structurally weak Alpine zones which continually suffer from massive brain drain. Usually, the impetus for migration is the lack of tertiary

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2 This project is financed by research grant 12-55323.98 of the Swiss National Fund, with additional funding from the University of Berne's General Linguistics Department for the transcription of data. It is carried out under Prof. Iwar Werlen whose child the research setup is. Thanks go to all the people who have been so dedicated to the success of the project up to this point, i.e. Barbara Buri and Guido Gefter, as well as to Marinette Matthey who reviewed this paper.

3 The acquisition process has not been studied in detail so far. How the new dialect or an accommodated variety is acquired and whether this constitutes a uniform process or an amalgam of interacting and competing rules is one of the current research questions.

education as well as the sparsity of opportunities for vocational training. These essentially economic and educational reasons for migration are often strongly reinforced by emotional factors in one of two ways. Young people are either very reluctant to leave a close-knit social environment with a mostly rural character and move to the urban centers north of the Alps[4], or they cannot wait to get away from what they experience as a geographically narrow and socially tight environment. In both cases, however, strong ties and frequent weekend visits to friends and family back home are the norm.

The informants of the Dialect Loyalty Project are either long-term or recent migrants now permanently or transiently residing in the greater Berne area. Long-term migrants (n=30) have lived in Berne for five or more years. They are of various ages and socio-economic backgrounds. For the purposes of the Dialect Loyalty Project, they are interviewed just once. Recent migrants (n=49)[5] are new arrivals in the Berne area. This group consists of young people, aged 16 through 31 at the time of their arrival and, again, of various socio-economic backgrounds. They are interviewed three times: once within the first few weeks after their arrival, and then again after one and two years of their stay in Berne. This research setup allows for a real-time as well as for an apparent-time study of dialect accommodation in the context of migration.

The data in the Üsserschwyz corpus consists of semi-formal conversations of 40 to 90 minutes about the informants' personal background and their experiences in the new situation. The interviewers are speakers of Bernese and Argovian German (*cf.* Marti, 1985 for Bernese, and Bigler, 1979, and Siebenhaar, 2000 for Argovian German) which differ markedly from the informants' dialect(s) (see 2.2) so that the dialect spoken by the informants in the interview is likely to be an *accommodated variety* or *exolect*. The interview does include a word list and a picture description task but otherwise differs from the classical sociolinguistic interview insofar as these tasks are woven naturally into the interview[6]. Moreover, social

4 The name of the corpus presented in this paper, *Üsserschwyz* (used interchangeably with the term *Dialect Loyalty* corpus), is the term used in the German speaking part of the canton of Valais to refer to all other parts of Switzerland, literally «outer Switzerland»; it is a reflection of the felt distance and difference between the Upper Rhone Valley and other parts of the country.

5 This number is likely to decrease due to the fact that some informants return home early or drop out of the sample for other reasons.

6 A reading passage was not included in the interview because dialects are not usually written except in informal letters and notes and in dialect literature. However, reading

network data are elicited with standardized questionnaires which informants are asked to fill out at the end of each interview. Changes over time in linguistic behavior can thus be compared with changes over time in the informants' social network structure.

Full-length content transcriptions of all interviews are available. Narrower dialect transcriptions are made using a refined version of Dieth's transcription system for Swiss German dialects (Dieth, 1986) in the GAT format (Selting *et al.*, 1998). High frequency variables are coded and analyzed in CHAT and CLAN (*cf.* MacWhinney, 1991).

2.2 Linguistic Background

Linguistically, the Upper Valaisan dialect(s) can be set apart from other German dialects by a number of isoglosses (*cf.* Hotzenköcherle, 1984). The geographic location in the extreme south of the German speaking world, isolated from its linguistic relatives by the Alps and the French-speaking Lower Rhone Valley, led to the preservation of a number of Middle High German traits lost in other dialects and the development of a few idiomatic innovations that sets the Highest Alemannic dialects apart from the High Alemannic dialects spoken in the urban centers of Berne and Zurich.

On the level of the lexicon, more numerous French loans such as *pusset* for «baby carriage» and *poort* for «door» than in other Swiss dialects are typical. Morphologically, features such as the productive diminutive suffixes *-ji*, *-si*, *-schi*, *-i* and *-elti* instead of the common *-li* in all other dialects [e.g. Valais German *vogelti* vs. Bernese *vögeli* for «little bird», *cf.* Linguistic Atlas of German-speaking Switzerland, vol. 3 (Hotzenköcherle, 1975, maps 149-154)], the three forms in the verbal plural vs. two (or one) form(s) in the other Swiss dialects [*wier ässe/ier ässet/schi ässen*][7] in Valais German vs. *mer ässe/der ässet/si ässe* in Bernese German for «we eat/ you eat/ they eat» (*ibid.*, maps 33-34)], and inflection for gender on predicative adjectives vs. non-inflected forms in most other Swiss dialects [Valais German *är isch aalte/ schi isch aalti/ äs isch aalts* vs. Bernese *är isch aut/ si isch aut/ äs isch aut* for «he is old/ she is old/ it is old» (*ibid.*, map 256)] are striking. The boundaries between these features form a corridor of isoglosses which mark the transition between Bernese German and Valais German. From a perception point of view, however, it is

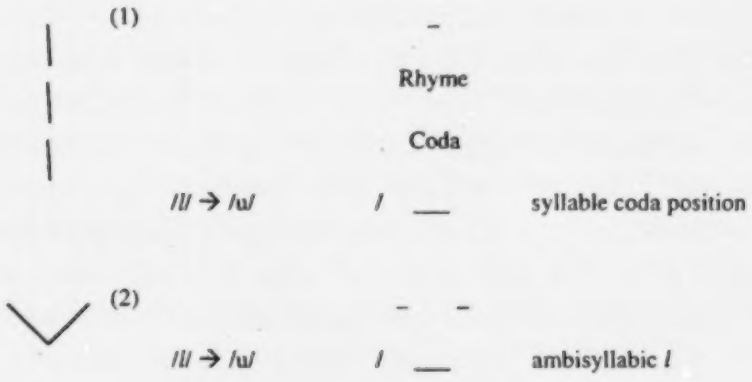
dialect is generally considered difficult because of the lack of commonly agreed upon writing rules and the diversity between the phonological systems of the dialects.

7 Another Valaisan dialect feature is the specific form of the pronoun.

probably the phonological features that most saliently define what people commonly refer to as Valais German, even though these phonological features can be shown not to be part of speakers' metalinguistic knowledge[8]. Nor are any of these segmental phonological dialect features exclusively Valaisan and congruent with the boundaries of the canton of Valais.

The only feature to come close to such a requirement would be the postalveolar sibilant which is an alveolar one in other parts of Switzerland. The postalveolar sibilant, especially before the close front vowel *i*, is evidenced in words like Valais German *schine* vs. Bernese *si* for the masculine possessive pronoun «his», or Valais German *naatersch* vs. Bernese *naaters* for the name of the town of Naters (*cf.* Bohnenberger, 1913; Hotzenköcherle, 1984; Schnidrig, 1985). In some phonological contexts and geographic locations in the Upper Rhone Valley, postalveolarization of *s* is more variable than in others. It is not attested in Berne[9].

A striking feature of Bernese German and other High Alemannic dialects is the vocalization of the lateral *l* (*cf.* Christen, 2001 for an overview). *L*-vocalization is most easily explained prosodically with the rules shown in (1) and (2):



8 Sometimes informants did mention some features that they changed when speaking to people who they assumed would not understand them if they spoke Valais Geman. Lexical items figure by far most prominently among them. Among the much less frequently mentioned phonological features, prosodic ones such as speed and melody outrank segmental ones.

9 One of the exceptions to this rule is the lexical item *iisch* for «ice» which has a postalveolar fricative in many locations outside the Upper Rhone Valley as well [*cf.* Linguistic Atlas of German-speaking Switzerland, vol. 2 (Hotzenköcherle, 1965, map 144)].

Examples of *l*-vocalization in syllable coda position are Valais German *baald* and *määlde* vs. Bernese German *baud* and *mäude* for «soon» and «to notify», respectively. Examples for vocalized *l* in ambisyllabic position are Valais German *bälle* and *brille* vs. Bernese German *bäue* and *bröue* for «to bark» and «glasses», respectively[10]. While this rule is fully productive in the city of Berne (and spreading from there to surrounding areas and as far to the south as Spiez[11]), it is only attested in a few communities in the highest part of the Upper Rhone Valley. According to Bohnenberger (1913, § 88), this «labialized» lateral differs from a regular vowel in Valais German in that its occurrence after a vowel does not create the impression of a diphthong. However, the pertinent maps in the Linguistic Atlas of German-speaking Switzerland, vol. 2 (Hotzenköcherle, 1965, maps 147-150), do not show a difference in the transcription of the sound quality and quantity between Bernese and Valais German realizations of this phenomenon. It is therefore safe to assume that the acoustic quality of vocalized *l* is the same in both places.

Besides the attested «dialectality» of the postalveolar sibilant and *l*-vocalization in the literature, tests with speakers of Valais German who were asked to imitate Bernese German showed that *l*-vocalization is a highly salient feature (for the use of salience as an explanatory concept in accommodation *cf.* Auer *et al.*, 1998; Kerswill and Williams (forthcoming), and Trudgill, 1986, as well as older dialectological sources such as Schirmunski 1930). In Labov's terms, *l*-vocalization is a *stereotype*, i.e. its «social and regional connotations become a part of common knowledge» (Chambers and Trudgill, 1998, p. 75). Dialect accommodation involving a stereotype is therefore likely to be conscious. The postalveolar sibilant seems to be a dialect feature below the level of awareness and can therefore be hypothesized to be an *indicator*. If it gets accommodated, it is a change that probably goes unnoticed by the speakers[12].

These qualities along with the fact that they are very frequent in the data make the above variables ideal for the study of linguistic behavior. It is our working hypothesis that these dialect features will be accommodated to the

10 Other Valaisan dialect features in this example are the long vowels *a* and *ä* in *baald* and *määlde* which are short in Bernese German. Moreover, the *i* in Valais German *brille* shows the unrounded vowel *i* which is rounded in Bernese German.

11 This spread to Spiez has recently been shown in a seminar paper by Alexandra Flury who tested the pupils of two classes and found variable use of *l*-vocalization.

12 In the 3rd person singular feminine and the 3rd person (generic) plural pronoun in Valais German, *schi*, however, the postalveolar sibilant seems to be somewhat more salient than in other lexical items, according to the above mentioned imitation test.

Bernese variant in the language of an accommodating Valais German speaker and that they will be safeguarded from outside influence by those speakers who wish to preserve their native dialect. The contrast between (Bernese) variable adaptation vs. (Valais German) variable preservation is what we hope to capture by an extension of Weinreich's concept of *language loyalty* (Weinreich, 1953, § 4.41) to a concept of *dialect loyalty*[13].

2.3 Sociolinguistic Background

From a sociolinguistic point of view, the Upper Valais dialects are fairly prestigious, both covertly and overtly. Our informants frequently report a type of *foreigner's advantage* that they enjoy when they use the easily definable and markedly different Valais German dialect in Berne. Werlen's 1985 report of a pilot study on attitudes toward dialects supports this: He shows that evaluations of Valais German differ from region to region, but frequent adjectives attributed to it are *colorful*, *lively* and *exotic*. Nevertheless, despite the high degree of *tolerance of linguistic variation* in German-speaking Switzerland (Werlen, 1998), upper Valaisans are under a certain pressure to accommodate their dialect when they speak to fellow Swiss Germans because, on the negative side, they are also considered *hard to understand* (*cf.* also Schnidrig, 1985).

The informants find themselves in an environment that predominantly speaks Bernese German and other non-Valaisan Swiss German dialects. Bernese German is a highly prestigious and widely used variety. The Bernese dialect is said, among other things, to be *snug*, *cosy*, *pleasant*, *warm* and *friendly* (*cf.* Werlen, 1985), and it has national importance as a dialect frequently used in the media. Valais German has only recently gained more than just local propagation through the national media. Though extensive mobility increases the exposure to and intelligibility of marginal dialects as well, the situation just outlined still holds in German-speaking Switzerland.

13 Even though the terminology chosen here might suggest that accommodation is a controlled and voluntary process, this is not a point we are trying to make. The intentionality question cannot be answered on the basis of the data presented here which only allow for the analysis of linguistic behavior. The interpretation of that behavior in terms of the status / saliency of a variable, social network structure, attitudes, loyalty, etc. is, at this point, only preliminary.

3. The Informants and their Social Network Structure

This study is the presentation of work in progress. At this point, all recent migrants have been interviewed at least twice and data from two thirds of the long-term migrants have also been collected. It is too early, however, to make generalizable claims about the Dialect Loyalty Corpus as a whole. Nevertheless, the linguistic behavior of two individuals, Ms X and Mr Y, has lead us to formulate the hypotheses given in the introduction of this paper and repeated here for convenience. On the basis of the data presented shortly, we will make the claim that neither the direction nor the speed of change is predictable from attitudes and social network structure and that even a fossilized variety may still show considerable internal variation.

Ms X (20) migrated from the canton of Valais to Berne to complete her training as a hairdresser. From the very start she liked her life in Berne and the opportunities of a city and ended up deciding not to return back to Valais but to look for a job in Berne. Her social network structure in the first year shows an unusually high coefficient of non-Valaisans which sets her apart from most other new arrivals in the corpus who either keep strong ties to the people at home or indicate that the majority of new acquaintances in Berne are of Valais origin. A year later, this characteristic is further solidified by even more non-Valaisan contacts in her network.

Mr Y (44) came to Berne at the age of 22 for educational and career reasons. A weekend commuter in the beginning (to see his wife and daughter in Valais), he moved to a suburb of Berne when his family caught up with him; they have lived there ever since. Mr Y does not intend to go back to Valais. He has his most important ties (close family, business and clients) in Berne. The analysis of his social contacts is remarkable in one way and quite unremarkable in another. On the one hand, he lists only seven people with whom he is in regular contact or who he has seen, talked to or exchanged letters with at least twice in the previous four weeks. On the other hand, his non-Valaisan coefficient is high: More than half of his regular contacts are non-Valaisans.

In order to compare social networks, they are quantified by calculating a factor R on the basis of the formula in (3).

$$(3) \qquad R = \frac{VS}{VS + BE},$$

where VS are contacts of Valais origin in the network and BE are contacts of Bernese (or any other) origin. The R-factors for Ms X are 0.72 in the first year and 0.62 in the second year, which shows that her Valais contacts are losing ground over time. From these data and her plans about the future

it can be hypothesized with some certainty that this number will be decreasing further throughout the next year(s). Mr Y's *R*-factor is 0.43 which situates him in the vicinity of his group's mean value of 0.40. His *R*-factor (but, of course, not necessarily the absolute numbers of mentions in his network) is likely to symbolize the social network structure of Ms X a few years down the road.

Both Ms X and Mr Y have a lot of client contact in their professions. They are similar in their positive attitudes toward Berne, a place they both appreciate in contrast to the Upper Rhone Valley as an environment with a wider range of possibilities. Ms X and Mr Y both migrated away from the canton of Valais for educational reasons and ended up staying away. They both have a migrational career which is very common in the Dialect Loyalty corpus. Ms X and Mr Y differ in terms of how often they go back to the Valais. While Ms X goes home to see her family and friends every weekend, Mr Y only travels to the canton of Valais in irregular intervals for family reunions and holidays and as rarely as just three times a year.

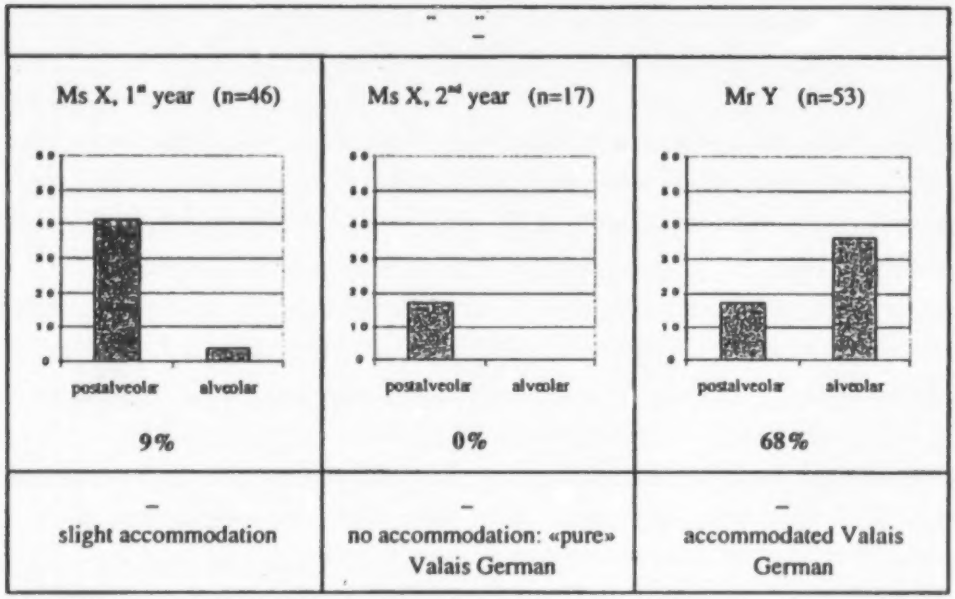
If it is possible at all to speculate about the patterns of accommodation that these two people will exhibit, based on what is common knowledge in the sociolinguistic literature, one would suspect that, if there are any differences at all between the two informants, Ms X, as a young woman who identifies with her new environment in which a prestigious, widespread variety of Swiss German is spoken, will have a stronger tendency to accommodate than Mr Y.

4. Accommodation

At least four types of dialect accommodation can be observed in the Dialect Loyalty corpus ranging from the acquisition of a new dialect and complete dialect change, to intermediate stages where code-switching and mixing occurs globally or locally, to the very conservative maintenance of the original dialect with very few traces of accommodation.

4.1 Similar Backgrounds, Dissimilar Behavior

What sort of accommodation behavior do Ms X and Mr Y have? With respect to the variable Bernese alveolar *s* vs. Valaisan postalveolar *ʃ*, the following pattern emerges:



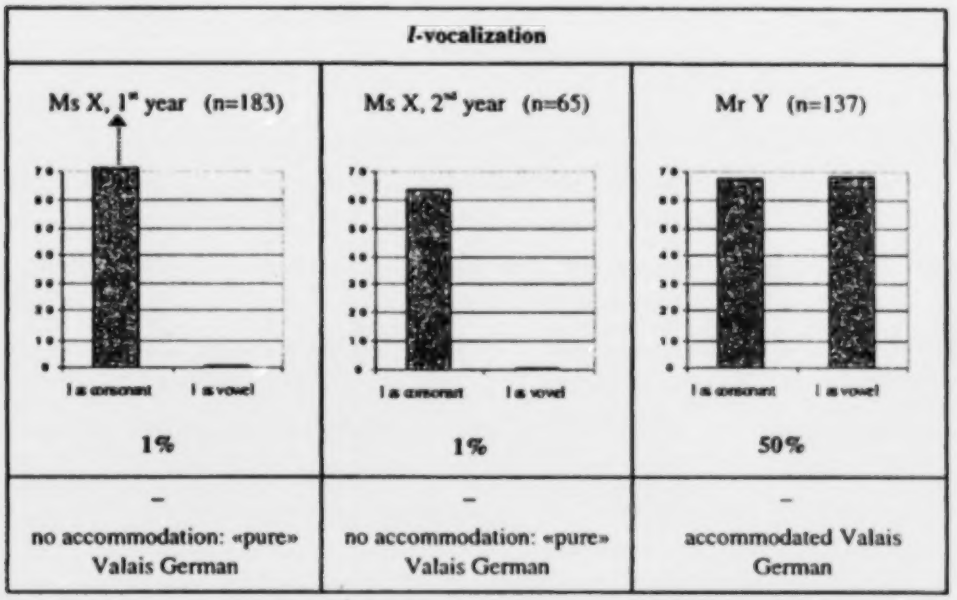
(fig. 1)

In terms of this one variable, Ms X accommodates slightly to Bernese German in the first year: 9% of her realizations are alveolar[14]. Methodologically, we are faced with a problem here because it is not clear whether this is the start of an accommodation or whether a very small number of *s* instead of *ʃ* is the norm in her idiolect. However, in the second interview a year later she speaks a prototypical Valais German basilect with respect to this variable.

The numbers are different for Mr Y who has significantly more realizations of alveolar *s*. He chooses the accommodated Bernese variant in 68% of all potential cases.

The next figure shows the dynamics of the variable *l*-vocalization. Similarly to the first variable, the two informants show divergent tendencies:

14 No index scores were calculated because all variables in this paper are binary and their value can equally well be expressed in percentages.



(fig. 2)

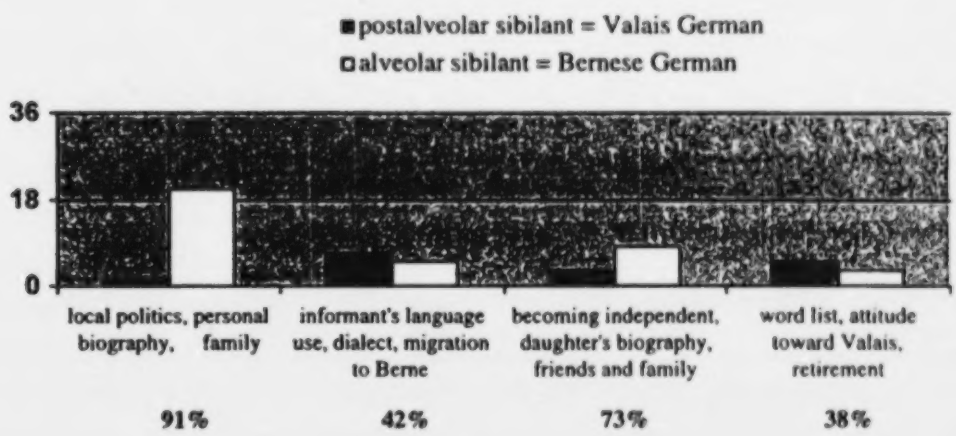
In both years, this salient Bernese feature remains markedly unaccommodated in Ms X's data. Mr Y, on the other hand, behaves differently: He uses the accommodated vocalized realization of the variable equally often as the unaccommodated consonantal one. At this time it is important to note that, up to the age of ten, Mr Y had lived in one of those villages in the Upper Rhone Valley where *l*-vocalization occurs. Afterwards he moved to a small town further down the valley where *l*-vocalization does not occur. When asked about his linguistic behavior some time after the interview, Mr Y could not comment on when or where he had learned this variable. However, whether or not he vocalized his *l*'s as a little child is not crucial; the fact is that he uses both realizations of this variable in his language today according to contextual rules (*cf.* 4.2).

A first and somewhat surprising finding is that Ms X and Mr Y do not show any kind of similarity in their linguistic behavior with respect to the two variables examined. Even though they have similar socio-economic backgrounds, social networks and attitudes, their behavior diverges. What is more is that, contrary to a commonly held opinion in sociolinguistics about women being linguistically less conservative than men, Ms X is not in the lead of a change, but the opposite is true: Ms X even decreases her first-year traces of accommodation in the second interview (*cf.* also Siebenhaar, 2000 and forthcoming, for further observations concerning gender influences on language use). As a matter of fact, the *time of exposure* to the Bernese dialect seems to be the only diverging non-

linguistic factor discriminating the two informants. Whether the extent of accommodation is simply a question of time of exposure, however, or whether it is subject to other influences[15] remains to be seen, with first indications of answers possibly emerging after the next interview with Ms X and as the analyses of the data in the Dialect Loyalty Corpus become more numerous.

4.2 Vascillating Accommodation

A closer look at Mr Y's data reveals another interesting fact. If his use of consonantal vs. vocalized *l* is examined over time, i.e. over the first thirty minutes of the interview, it can be demonstrated that his accommodations are not linearly spread but clustered at certain points during the interview. Figure (3) shows this for the variable postalveolar vs. alveolar sibilant:



(fig. 3)

Overall, this variable is quite accommodated towards Bernese German – the accommodation index never falls below 38% with an average of 68% of the realizations in Bernese German (*cf.* fig. 1). There are two local peaks where the Bernese variant occurs much more frequently. This happens most strikingly during the first twelve minutes of the interview when the

15 An increase over the past decades of the tolerance of linguistic variation as well as differing attitudes toward dialects at the respective times of migration may be among these influences. On the level of the indivuum, it remains to be seen whether Ms X is building up bilingual competence in both Valais and Bernese German; in this case, her use of Valais German may be an artefact of the interview situation in which she thinks that she is expected to speak Valais German.

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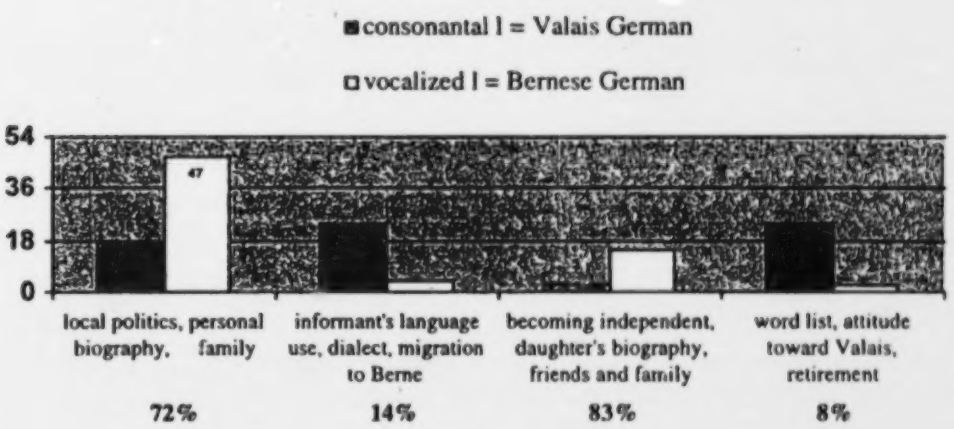
informant talks about local (Bernese) politics, his personal biography and his immediate family in Berne. The second and smaller peak occurs after approximately 19 minutes when Mr Y again talks about topics which have their geographic locus in Berne. The accommodation indices drop dramatically when the informant talks about his own language use and his migration to Berne and, especially, when he is presented with a Valais German word list and, in continuation, when he talks about what his thoughts and feelings are toward the Upper Rhone Valley where, according to Mr Y, one can buy the best cheese and home-made sausages in Switzerland. Nevertheless, despite culinary benefits, he would, for various reasons, much rather not return there for good, not even when he retires.

The other variable shows this vascillating pattern even more pointedly in figure 4:



(fig. 4)

Again, accommodation indices reflect topic breaks during the interview. It is astonishing to what degree Mr Y is able to (consciously or subconsciously) control his dialect variables. Three factors seem to be responsible for this pattern, all other overtly controllable things being equal (same time, same room, same setting).

- Topic breaks: Whenever the topic of the conversation has its geographical locus in Berne, Mr Y uses more Bernese realizations.
- Degrees of self-monitoring: The informant seems to be able to produce more Valais German realizations when the topic of the conversation is his language. This is especially salient during and after the word list task.

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– Beginning of conversation: There may be a phase of uncertainty concerning his addressees' competence in understanding Valais German. Therefore, he converges towards their dialect so that smooth conversation without too many interruptions is guaranteed.

If these factors are indeed relevant for Mr Y's linguistic behavior, there are several interesting interpretations. On the one hand, Mr Y locates his immediate family in Berne even though his wife is also from the Upper Rhone Valley and his daughter speaks Valais German at home. Nevertheless, for Mr Y, place of residence has precedence over birthplace and origin.

His attitudes towards Valais, however, are not formulated from a Bernese perspective, his accommodation index being very low in that part of the conversation. What is puzzling here is the fact that *what* he says about Valais is not as unambiguously positive as his linguistic behavior might lead one to believe. There is a discrepancy between content and form which may be an indication of some sort of *covert prestige* associated with the Upper Rhone Valley and its dialect.

The fact that Mr Y's accommodation index is very high during the first part of the interview may also be due to an uncertainty on his part about the situation of the interview: He knows that the interviewers are interested in his personal biography and migration history but he cannot be sure that they will understand an unaccommodated Valais German dialect. During the first few minutes of the interview, the degree of accommodation necessary for successful communication has to be negociated on the background of his temporary role as a representative of the Valais German speaking community.

Spreading effects may also be involved. Certain topics trigger a high degree of Valais or Bernese German realizations in the form of a code-switch. After a certain peak is reached, indices gradually reduce again. Accommodation scores during topics which would normally not involve high degrees of accommodation can thus be influenced by what precedes them. The code-switch would then be said to be gradual.

5. Conclusions, Reservations, Perspectives

The data in this paper suggest that there is no simple or direct correlation between attitudes, social network structure and linguistic data. The speed and degree of accommodation cannot be predicted on the basis of comparable backgrounds and motivations for migration. Gender and age do

not have the expected influence on the accommodation patterns of Ms X and Mr Y in the sense sometimes suggested in the sociolinguistic literature.

In the data presented in this paper, the most interesting patterns emerge from the study of the relation between topic and accommodation. It is therefore not enough to study accommodation globally. The vascillating pattern of Mr Y shows that his linguistic behavior is highly sensitive to conversational context and extra-linguistic factors such as geographic allocation of topics, to when a specific topic is addressed relative to other topics and to the interview as a whole, and to the task (word list vs. casual speech). The interplay of overt and covert prestige seems to play a certain role as well, though this is notoriously difficult to claim and always runs the risk of circularity of argumentation.

The type of research presented here always has to deal with a number of factors which cannot be controlled. The linguistic behavior of the informants may, to some extent, be influenced by factors such as the relative formality of the interview situation with recording equipment and questionnaires. Also, the perceived purpose of the interview in which informants are addressed specifically as people from the Upper Rhone Valley may influence speakers' linguistic behavior. What is more is the fact that the interviewers, because of increased exposure to Valais German, usually do not have any difficulty understanding the informants even if they speak a very unaccommodated variant of Valais German. This may result in somewhat skewed data because the informants are not under the same kind of pressure to accommodate as they are when they cannot assume interlocutors' familiarity with Valais German.

The two patterns of (non-)accommodation presented in this paper are, of course, not the only ones we are finding in the Dialect Loyalty Project data. Situational code-switching and complete dialect acquisition leading to dialect change have been attested (Werlen *et al.*, forthcoming). However exceptional or divergent the patterns presented here may be in the corpus as a whole, they give us indications as to what we have to look for in further analyses.

The Dialect Loyalty Project is now entering the phase of more in-depth analyses of a number of other speakers in terms of further variables. Moreover, dialect imitation tasks are performed to determine the salience of dialect features and how salience might explain some of the linguistic behaviors we are finding. Social network structures are being quantified and statistically evaluated to see how they correlate with informants' linguistic behavior.

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